

Rheumatology physiotherapy exercises for stiffness and weakness in inflammatory arthritis

This leaflet is for patients diagnosed with inflammatory arthritis and outlines suitable exercises to reduce stiffness and improve strength as recommended by the Rheumatology Physiotherapy Team.

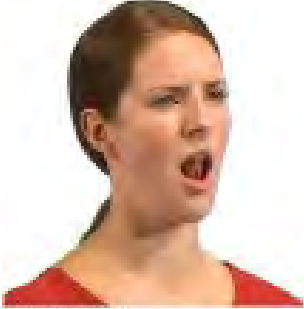
General advice about doing the exercises

Regular exercise maintains joint movement and muscle strength and flexibility. It is important to perform these movements slowly, nudging into the stiffness right at the end of each exercise. Hold the final position for a period of 5-10 seconds to activate your muscles fully.

You do not need to do all of these exercises every day but they can provide a reference to help you maintain and check your joint range of movement, or to do regularly if you feel a particular area is becoming stiff or weak. You can do the exercises at any time of the day. We appreciate it may seem difficult to find time to exercise in a busy day. At the end of the exercise diagrams, you will find some suggestions on how you can build them into your day to help you do them regularly.

 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Hold your wrist and fingers straight. • Hook your fingers then make a full fist as shown. • Repeat 5 times.		 ©PhysioTools Ltd
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Pinch your thumb against each fingertip making an 'O' shape. • Then slide your thumb down to the base of the little finger. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Straighten your fingers back. • Repeat 5 times.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Bend your wrist down keeping fingers relaxed. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Arch the wrist back keeping fingers relaxed. • Repeat 5 times.

 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sit or stand with your elbow bent. • Turn your palm up and down rotating your forearm. • Repeat 5 times.		
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Bend and then straighten your elbow fully. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Slide one hand up your back. Help with the other hand if needed. • Repeat 5 times.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lift both arms straight forward and up over your head. • Then separate your arms sideways and take them back down to the starting position. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sit up tall, extend upper spine then pull head back until in line with body. • Place your hands behind your ears, elbows pointing outwards. • Take a deep breath in through nose and out through mouth, expand lungs fully each time (especially the bases) • Repeat once or twice.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sitting. • Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. • Repeat once or twice to each side.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sitting. • Tilt your head toward one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side. • Repeat once or twice to each side.

 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sitting. • Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch behind your neck. • Repeat once or twice.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Sitting. • Bend your head back as far as is comfortable (unless it makes you feel dizzy). • Repeat once or twice.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Open your mouth slowly; make sure that you move your lower jaw down in a straight line. Keep your neck straight. • Repeat once or twice.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Slide your lower jaw to the right and then to the left. • Repeat once or twice.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Move your jaw forwards then backwards. • Repeat once or twice.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lying or sitting. • Bend and straighten your toes. • Repeat 5 times.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lying or sitting. • Rotate your ankle. Change direction. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lying or sitting. • Pull your feet upwards and then point down. • Repeat 5 times.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Pull your foot up towards you and then straighten your knee. • Return slowly to the starting position. • Repeat 5 times. • Can also be done lying down.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Stand straight and stretch tall holding on to something firm. • Take your leg back keeping your knee straight to further stretch the hip. • Keep your toes on the floor. • Repeat 5 times.

 ©Physiotools	• Sit up tall and arch your back. • Then slowly slump down and round your back. • Practice moving between these positions 5 times.		• Lie on your back on a bed or the floor with your knees bent. • Slowly roll your hips and knees from side to side keeping your shoulders flat. • Repeat 5 times.
 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lie on your back on a bed or the floor. • Slide your leg out to the side and then back in. • Repeat 5 times.	 ©PhysioTools Ltd	• Lie on your back on a bed or the floor. • Pull your knee towards stomach helping with your hands. Push your other leg down flat. • Repeat 5 times.

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Suggestions for building some of the exercises in to your day:

- While washing and drying under your arms, lift the arm right above your head to exercise the shoulder.
- While stationary at traffic lights (handbrake on if driving), sit back in your seat and do a neck stretch.
- While watching TV, when the programmes change/adverts come on, do some foot and ankle exercises.
- While sitting at your computer or sitting during the day, try to do one of the seated or one of the hand exercises, every hour.
- While waiting for the kettle to boil – do a hip extension stretch at the kitchen work surface.
- When cleaning your teeth check your jaw movements.

Contacting us

For further information or queries about these exercises, please contact Physiotherapy Outpatient Department on 0118 322 7811 / 7812 email royalberks.physiotherapy@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Kathryn Rigler, RBFT Physiotherapy Department, April 2022

Next review due: April 2024

Compassionate

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Excellent